

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN
NIGERIA: A STUDY OF OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF EDO STATE
(2015-2025)**

BY

**ARINZE ANNA JETELOJOR
SSC2105782**

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN
BENIN CITY**

OCTOBER, 2025

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**BEING A PROJECT PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION, FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
BENIN CITY, IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
AWARD OF B.Sc DEGREE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

OCTOBER, 2025

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project work was carried out by **ARINZE ANNA JETELOJOR** with Mat. No. **SSC2105782**, in the department of public administration, Faculty of social Science, university of Benin, Benin City in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc) in public administration.

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Prof. A. I. Mustapha
Project Supervisor

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Date

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Prof. A. I. Mustapha
Head of Department

.....
Date

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my mother, Mrs. Grace Arinze, my superhero.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanksgiving goes to GOD whose mercy and love made the completion of my academic pursuit and projects a possibility.

I am grateful to my project supervisor, PROF. A. I. MUSTAPHA for his patience and corrections towards me, and also to MR. RAJI for all the attention and tutoring given to me despite the disturbances, which actually led to the completion of this project. To my course advisor, for his immense love and attention towards me, thank you sir, God bless you.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between local government autonomy and socioeconomic development in Nigeria, using Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State as a case study. The research emphasizes the vital role of local governments in promoting grassroots development. Despite this, local governments in Nigeria have often been constrained by excessive interference from higher tiers of government, particularly in financial, administrative, and political matters. Such interference has weakened their capacity to function effectively and to implement developmental programs tailored to local needs. This study adopts a descriptive survey research design to assess the extent to which local government autonomy influences socioeconomic development in Oredo Local Government Area. The findings reveal that granting full financial, administrative, and political autonomy to local governments is crucial for enhancing service delivery and achieving sustainable development. The conclusion drawn by this research is that genuine local government autonomy is important and of necessity for effective grassroots governance and recommends that both federal and state governments should provide the necessary constitutional and institutional support to ensure full autonomy for local governments across Nigeria as this would enhance socio economic development at the grassroots and the country as a whole.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of study

The local government system is the third tier of government as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution guarantees the establishment of democratically elected local government). Apart from the Federal government, 36 States of the federation, and revenue capital autonomy the next level of government is the local governments. It is on record that Nigeria today has a total of 774 local government areas. These local governments were created with the aim of bringing governance close to the people; Agbakoba (2004)

Structurally, the Nigerian government is made of three tiers which include the federal government, state government and local government. The three levels of government are all involved in delivering dividends of democracy to the people. Individually, they each have their roles to play as entities but they also collaborate in certain respect especially when it has to do with finance and management. This ensures improvement in accountability and performance.

The reason for the 3- tiers of government, as enshrined in the constitution of Nigeria (section 7(1) of the 1999 constitution), is because Nigeria practices a decentralized form of government whereby power is devolved from the centre to governments at the states and local governments for effective governance and enhanced national development.

National development entails having functional infrastructures which contribute positively to the socio-economic development of the people living in a nation where it is very difficult for

government to run a whole country especially if the country covers a very large expanse of land, like Nigeria. Ahmed (2016); journals of humanities and social science,21(10)

Devolving power to governments governing over smaller areas helps the people in that area to feel the impact of the government more easily as compared to a situation where there is only a central government in existence. The local government areas in Nigeria are governed by the local government chairman and the wards, which are part of the local governments, are presided over by councilors. Ahmed (2016); journals of humanities and social science,21(10)

The creation of local government emanates from the desire to facilitate development at the grassroots level. Local government autonomy is of uttermost significance due to its functional ability to generate a sense of belongingness, safety as well as gratification among its inhabitants. All types of government, administrations, regimes or political systems have so far made sure that this goal is attained. The concept and practice of local government autonomy is a strategy for ensuring national administrative development, as well as political efficacy. Whatever is the kind of government; local government autonomy is viewed essentially as well as regarded as the gateway to, and guarantor of national socio-economic development of rural areas in the country (Gaub, 2004).

In the socio-political context in Nigeria, with multiple culture, diversity in languages and differential means as well as needs, the significance of the autonomy of such a tier of government with a view to fostering and engendering the desired national consciousness, unity and relative uniformity as well as preservation of peculiar diversities and the socio-economic development of rural areas cannot over debated or emphasized. Local government autonomy has

been perceived as a panacea for the diverse challenges of the divergent people with different culture (Gaub, 2014).

Gray and Barford (2018) argue that local government autonomy is essential for effective service delivery and the promotion of economic development in rural communities.

The importance of local government autonomy in Nigeria is predicated on its justification for socio economic development of the rural areas, culminating to socio economic development in Nigeria. As a level of government in a federal state, it is basically created with the aim of improving the living standard of the rural people and transforming the rural areas in Nigeria. According to Jamo (2018) local government is a government fundamentally established to bring service to the rural areas and governance closer to the rural people in Nigeria. It is a government needed by all due to its relevance in the development of the people and their rural communities.

According to Ahamba (2017) “local government is something that we need in this country, if we really say democracy is government of the people, by the people and for the people” The local government is needed to provide the platform for democratic participation of the rural people and creating the enabling ground for choosing who governs them through necessary political process in Nigeria. The good thing in Nigeria is that every citizen is from a local government and is residing in a local government including foreign nationals, the local government becomes the nearest and easily accessible government to the people, with the powers to provide the needed basic facilities for survival.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Local governments in Nigeria are constitutionally recognized as vital agents for promoting socio-economic development at the grassroots level (Olowu & Wunsch, 2004). However, the autonomy of these local authorities remains significantly compromised due to persistent interference from state governments and central authorities, which undermines their ability to function independently (Akinyemi, 2010; Ndegwa, 2002). Despite constitutional provisions that are designed to safeguard local government autonomy, the practical reality is that local governments are often subjected to a lack of financial independence, administrative control, and policy-making freedom, which limits their capacity to effectively address the socio-economic challenges within their jurisdictions (Oyediran, 1998).

The failure to fully empower local governments limits their ability to craft and implement policies that are responsive to local needs, resulting in suboptimal socio-economic development outcomes (Tunde, 2012). Thus, the relationship between local government autonomy and socio-economic development remains a critical area of inquiry. This study aims to investigate the extent to which the lack of full local government autonomy constrains socio-economic development in Nigeria using Oredo local government area of Edo state as a case study, with a focus on identifying key barriers to effective local governance and proposing potential strategies for enhancing the role of local governments in fostering national development. The central question for this study is: How does the lack of full local government autonomy in Oredo Local Government Area affect its socio-economic development? This study seeks to explore the impact of limited local government autonomy on development outcomes in Oredo LGA, examining both the challenges faced by the local government and the potential benefits of enhancing its autonomy.

1.3 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between local government autonomy and socio-economic development in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. In line with the primary objective, To:

1. Examine the extent to which local government autonomy is constrained by state government interference in Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State.
2. Analyze the implications of limited local government autonomy on the efficient delivery of public services and socio-economic development in Oredo LGA.
3. Identify the key challenges faced by Oredo LGA in achieving socio-economic development due to the lack of local government autonomy.
4. Assess the potential benefits of greater local government autonomy in improving socio-economic outcomes in Oredo Local Government Area.
5. Provide policy recommendations for enhancing local government autonomy in Oredo LGA to promote sustainable socio-economic development.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The rationale behind this study is to provide answers to the following research questions:

1. To what extent is local government autonomy in Oredo Local Government Area constrained by state government interference?
2. How does limited local government autonomy affect the delivery of public services in Oredo Local Government Area?

3. What are the key challenges faced by Oredo Local Government Area in achieving socio-economic development due to the lack of autonomy?
4. What are the potential socio-economic benefits of greater local government autonomy in Oredo LGA?

1.6 significance of the study

This study focuses on providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between local government autonomy and socio-economic development in Nigeria, using Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State as a focal point. In recent years, there has been growing concern over the limited autonomy of local governments in Nigeria, particularly in terms of fiscal independence, administrative control, and political decision-making. These limitations have often been linked to poor service delivery, inadequate infrastructure, and underdevelopment at the grassroots level. By critically examining the extent of autonomy granted to local governments and how this affects their capacity to initiate and implement development projects, this study seeks to uncover the root causes of inefficiency in local governance. It also aims to assess whether greater autonomy could lead to improved socio-economic outcomes such as better education, healthcare, employment opportunities, and infrastructural development. Through this case study, the research intends to contribute to ongoing national discussions about restructuring, decentralization, and the need to empower local institutions for more effective and inclusive development. It will also serve as a useful source of information for the students and academicians conducting research.

1.7 The scope of the study

This study focuses on critically examining the relationship between local government autonomy and socio-economic development in Nigeria, using Oredo Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State as a case study. The study explores how varying degrees of autonomy—administrative, fiscal, and political—affect the capacity of the local government to drive development at the grassroots level. Specifically, the research investigates the level of control Oredo LGA has over its internal affairs, financial management, and decision-making processes, and how these influence developmental outcomes within the local government area.

Geographically, the study is limited to Oredo LGA, one of the most prominent and urbanized local government areas in Edo State. Oredo LGA was selected due to its strategic location, population density, and socio-economic diversity, which make it a suitable case for evaluating the impact of local government autonomy in both rural and semi-urban contexts. Although the study is localized, its findings are expected to offer insights that may be applicable to other LGAs across Nigeria, given the similar structural and constitutional constraints experienced nationwide.

Thematically, the study covers key dimensions of socio-economic development, including but not limited to infrastructure development, access to quality education, healthcare delivery, employment generation, environmental management, and poverty reduction. These dimensions are examined in light of the local government's ability to plan, finance, and implement development projects independently or with minimal interference from higher tiers of government.

The temporal scope of the study spans a ten-year period, from 2015 to 2025, to provide a comprehensive view of trends and patterns in local governance and development performance over time. This period allows for a meaningful evaluation of the impact of policy shifts, budget allocations, and administrative changes within the local government system.

While the study acknowledges the interplay between local, state, and federal governments, it deliberately focuses on the internal structure and functional independence of the local government. It does not attempt to provide an exhaustive analysis of federal-state-local relations but concentrates on how autonomy (or the lack thereof) affects the development capacity of Oredo LGA.

1.8 DEFINATION OF TERMS

1. Local Government:

Local government is the lowest tier in a decentralized system of governance, established to bring administration and development closer to the people. It functions under a legal framework that assigns specific responsibilities such as primary education, sanitation, local roads, and markets. According to the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Fourth Schedule), local governments are empowered to carry out specific functions that directly affect the lives of people at the grassroots. Nwankwo (2002) describes local government as “a political authority set up by a nation or state as a subordinate authority to assist in managing the affairs of the people within a restricted area.”

2. Autonomy:

Autonomy refers to the legal and practical ability of a body or institution to make decisions independently. In governance, autonomy implies self-governance, especially in decision-making, policy implementation, and financial control. Barber (1996) argues that autonomy is essential for any unit of government to function effectively and to reflect the will and needs of the people it governs.

3. Local Government Autonomy:

This concept refers to the degree of independence a local government possesses in managing its own affairs without interference from higher levels of government. It includes the ability to raise and manage funds, appoint staff, enact bylaws, and execute projects. According to Adeyemo (2005), “local government autonomy is the freedom of the local government to recruit and manage its own staff, raise and manage its own finances, make by-laws and policies, and discharge its functions as provided by law without external interference.” However, in Nigeria, this autonomy is often limited by excessive state control and political interference (Agagu, 2004).

4. Socio-Economic Development:

Socio-economic development refers to a process that improves both the economic and social conditions of individuals and communities. It involves improvements in education, health, income, employment, infrastructure, and quality of life. Todaro and Smith (2011) define socio-economic development as “the multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes, and national institutions, as well as

the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of poverty.”

5. Decentralization:

Decentralization is the process of transferring authority, responsibilities, and resources from the central government to lower levels, such as state or local governments. It is designed to enhance participation, accountability, and efficiency in governance.

Rondinelli (1981) identifies three types of decentralization: political, administrative, and fiscal. In Nigeria, decentralization is constitutionally embedded but often undermined by central and state government dominance.

6. Fiscal Autonomy:

Fiscal autonomy refers to the ability of local governments to generate, allocate, and control their financial resources. It includes the right to prepare budgets, collect revenues (such as rates and levies), and make expenditures without undue control. As Ola and Tonwe (2009) observe, fiscal autonomy is critical to enabling local governments to meet their development obligations and to ensure accountability in governance.

7. Administrative Autonomy:

This is the freedom of local governments to manage their internal administrative affairs, including staff recruitment, training, and deployment. Administrative autonomy also involves making independent decisions on local policy and project implementation. In the Nigerian context, however, local governments often lack real administrative independence due to political patronage and control by state governors (Okoli, 2005).

8. Political Autonomy:

Political autonomy refers to the capacity of local governments to exercise political functions without external interference. This includes the right to conduct local elections, make legislative decisions, and govern based on the mandate of the local electorate. According to Olowu and Wunsch (2004), political autonomy is essential for building accountable and participatory governance systems at the grassroots.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This section will review literatures on local government and socio-economic development to bring out the views of various scholars on the subject matter as well as present the theoretical background of the study. This chapter gives elaborate conceptualization of terms such as, local government, autonomy, socio economic development etc.

2.1 Local Government

Local government is and has been conceptualized by various literatures in existence.

According to the 1976 Local government reforms, it is government at local level exercised through representative councils established by law to exercise powers within defined areas.

A local government is a political and administrative unit that is empowered by law to administer a specific locality. He stated further that it involves a philosophical commitment to the idea of community participation as well as involvement in the government at the grassroots level which will invariably engender the much desired socioeconomic development of the rural areas in Nigeria. Agbakoba (2004),

According to Maj-Waśniowska and Jedynek (2020) Local government plays a significant role in the public administration system, by being responsible for the provision and management of a good number of public services, and also economic and social development of the grassroots.

In the views of Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe (2014), local government is defined area as well as a popularly elected democratic council. They went ahead to state that it has formal powers derived from the laws or constitution of the land, to decide on a range of public matters or issues in consultation with other stakeholders, compassing traditional rulers in the rural areas. The formal powers can only be altered by a subsequent legislation or constitutional amendment. The local government has personnel, financial as well as other resources, from whatever as other resources, from whatever sources, that are deployed, expended and invested at its own discretion for the execution of legally or constitutionally assigned and mutually agreed functions for the overt socioeconomic development of the rural areas. Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe (2014),

According to NOUN (2017) Local government is defined as grassroots – based comprises small units of local communities in which political power are developed to cater for the needs of the grassroots people. It engenders greater participation of the people in the process of government. It is designed to serve as a viable instrument for repeal and even development of local communities.

Appadorai (1975) local government is defined as the tier of government governed by popularly elected leaders charged with administrative and executive powers to oversee the welfares of the inhabitants of a particular place or district. According to Ezeani (2006) it is an important agent of development purposely created by the state government under a law to ensure democratic participation at the grassroots.

According to Oni, (1993), local government is that “level of government exercised through representative councils, established by law to exercise geographical area with common social and political ties”. These powers should give the council substantial

control over local affairs as well as the staff, and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to complement the activities of the state and federal governments in their areas.

Local government system can be defined as: Government at local level exercise through representative councils established by law to exercise specific powers within defined area. These powers should give the council substantial control over local affairs as well as the staff and institutional and financial powers to initiate and direct the provision of services and to determine and implement projects so as to ensure through devolution of functions to these councils and through the active participation, of the people and their traditional institutions that local initiative and response to local needs and conditions are maximized. (Awa, 2006:96)

These definitions are rooted in the meaning of local government by the United Nations, office for Public Administration which defines local government as: A political division of a nation or (in federal system), state, which is constituted by law and has substantial control of local affairs, including the powers to impose taxes or to exact labor for prescribed purpose (UN Report, 1960:3). The governing body of such an entity is elected or otherwise locally selected. (Quoted in Ola, 1984:7). The common denominator in these definitions is that local government is that local government is a subordinate system of government and has the authority to undertake public activities. (Eneanya, 2012:15). This authority has structures and functions, collects revenue, experiences some challenges and is controlled by central authority. These definitions are encompassing and most widely accepted and have theoretical implications.

2.1.1 Objective of Local Government in Nigeria

Local government is the third tier of government that is charged with the responsibility of providing good governance to the grassroots. It is machinery through which the will of government is expressed to the people at the local level. Local government is an important institution to ensure viable, even distribution of resources and to serve as a bridge between the government and the grassroots people. Makinde, Hassan and Olaiya (2016) opined that local government is an institution of grassroots that is designed to serve as a mechanism of development and rural transformation most especially in the waste management from the market and other important areas across the urban areas.

The objectives of local government should include:

- To establish local representative government institutions through which appropriate services

And development activities can be made more responsive to the local community;

- To provide opportunities for local communities to exercise their democratic right to self

Governance and determination at the local levels, and to encourage and develop initiatives and

Leadership potential;

- To mobilize human and material resources through the involvement of members of the public

in their local development; and

- To provide a two way channel of communication between the local communities and the

central government (Omamo, 1995).

2.1.2 Dimensions of the Concept of Local Government

The definition of United Nations Office for Public Administration and that of Kirk Green as well as definitions of some other writers clearly shows that local government is a multi-dimensional concept. The dimensions are:

Social Dimension

From the social dimension, local government is basically a social institution. It is an organized social entity based on the feeling of oneness. This emanates from the fact that man is a social animal and must of necessity interact with other people. Local government provides a platform for people in a locality to express and fulfill their human urge to interact and in the process of interaction, the feeling of convergence bring to the fore the commonality of basic needs of the people in the neighborhood of food, shelter, clothing, water, etc. It is these facets of their feeling of oneness that are a binding force not only among themselves but also between the local authority and the local people. (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

The feelings of convergence are the *raison d'être* for a local authority. They are a cementing force among local inhabitants. The stronger the feeling, the deeper the roots of a local authority, and the greater the resentment of outside. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

Economic Dimension

Local Government is basically an economic institution with a foremost role to play in promoting the economic well-being the people of the locality. The economic dimension of the concept of local government relates to its economic viability. Thus, revenue generation becomes a primary function of local government. A local government that is not economically viable cannot do much to improve the economic conditions of the people in the locality. It is impossible to give what you do not have. The economics of a local area reflects in its local authority. The local authority can give a good account of its performance without much problem if the locality is economically viable. An unviable area, with least potentiality for growth and development, makes local development a stupendous task for the local people. If the local government is economically viable, it will have the initial advantage in not only rendering local services, but also in warding off government intervention. Therefore, local governments work on the front lines delivering needed and desired services, such as education, road maintenance, public safety, and health care, to citizens . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

The concept of local government has an economic dimension of great significance. It highlights two facets of local authorities: one; with a bearing on their very existence as units for local self-governance; and the other, on their legitimate place in national development.

Cumulatively, these facets of the concept of local government can help promote the desirable objective of partnership between the central government and local government

for the ultimate fulfillment of the common goal of good life for the local populace. .
(Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

Geographic Dimension

Local government also has a geographic dimension.

From the perspective of a specific and defined territorial jurisdiction over a particular human habitation, the local government may be conceptualized in geographic terms.

The geography of local government, which includes physical, demographic and economic features, has its impact on its policies, administration and law. These various features are of universal character, hence may be conceptualized. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

The geographic dimension of local government stems from the fact that among the inhabitants of a given area, there is a consciousness that they are differentiated from the inhabitants of other areas in the same country. This is what is called the concept of neighborhood which makes the inhabitants of an area automatically aware of the interests which infringe upon them more directly than upon others. These interests differ in quality and character from the interests of other neighborhoods. With the interests varying from area to area, problems vary. Different problems entail different solutions, be they political, administrative or legal. Human migration and shifts in economic activity have, sometimes brought about revolutionary changes in the character of a local government. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

Legal Dimension

Local government is a legal institution in the sense that it is established by law of a competent and higher authority. This makes local government a miniature body-politic and a body corporate. In its former capacity, it is the agent of the State and, as such, represents public interest. In that capacity, it exercises a part of the powers of the State legally delegated to it within specified geographical boundaries. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

Thus, as a legal self-governing institution, local government:

A. exists as an organised entity, possessing organization and some minimum powers (constituting, what is called, autonomy) relating to the raising of revenue, preparation of budget, control and management local resources, human, fiscal and material.

B. has governmental character. As an agency of the public, it must be chosen by the local people to whom it must be accountable. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

C. has the right to enter into contract and to own and dispose of property. The corporate status makes the local government in law, a person with rights and duties of a private individual defined through legislation and allowed through judicial interpretation. As such, a local authority can institute legal proceedings for the recovery of its property; it can sue for outstanding debts, and can also seek to obtain damages for the breach for contract.

D. can also act as defendant in legal proceedings. It can be sued for failure to meet its obligations as employer, land owner, debtor or buyer. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

E. unlike other persons, it is bestowed by law the status of immortality - a continuous life. The people and the voters may come and go, the population may increase or decrease, Councilors and Mayors Chairman/President of local governments may be voted in or voted out, the form of local government and the extent of its powers may be changed from time to time, yet its legal entity will go on without interruption. Its perpetual succession will also continue indefinitely. Further, it has a name along with a corporate seal to distinguish it from other entities of a similar character. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

Political Dimension

Local government is also a political institution. Local government is basically a political mechanism for governance at the local level. It has a direct bearing on the nature of the local government which is very intriguing, giving rise to several questions. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

In this regard, it is important to note the following:

- i. Local government is not like other higher levels of government. It does not share with them legal and political sovereignty and does not usually derive authority directly from the Constitution. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)
- ii. Local government does not fall into the administrative hierarchy of the government. It is not an administrative outpost enjoying delegated authority. It is a level of government established by law. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

iii. Local government is not a public enterprise/public utility institution with statutory foundation, enjoying financial and operational autonomy. A body corporate with legislative and executive arms along with territory jurisdiction, deriving authority under law, may not actually qualify as a local government. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

Conceptually, local government is an integrant of democracy. When local government loses its democratic feature, it degenerates into local administration. When local administration imbibes democratic character, it then becomes local government. Without democratic norms there can be no self-governing institutions. The right of the citizens to elect local officials and to bestow on them the right to represent them which vox populi comes hand in hand with other basic democratic principles, such as accountability and transparency are of extreme importance for a sound and effective government (Dragos and Neamtu, 2009; Haruta, Radu and Radu, 2009; Haruta and Radu, 2010). In a real democracy, citizens' involvement is possible for three reasons; because they can, because they want or because they were asked (Verba et. al, 2004)

(Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

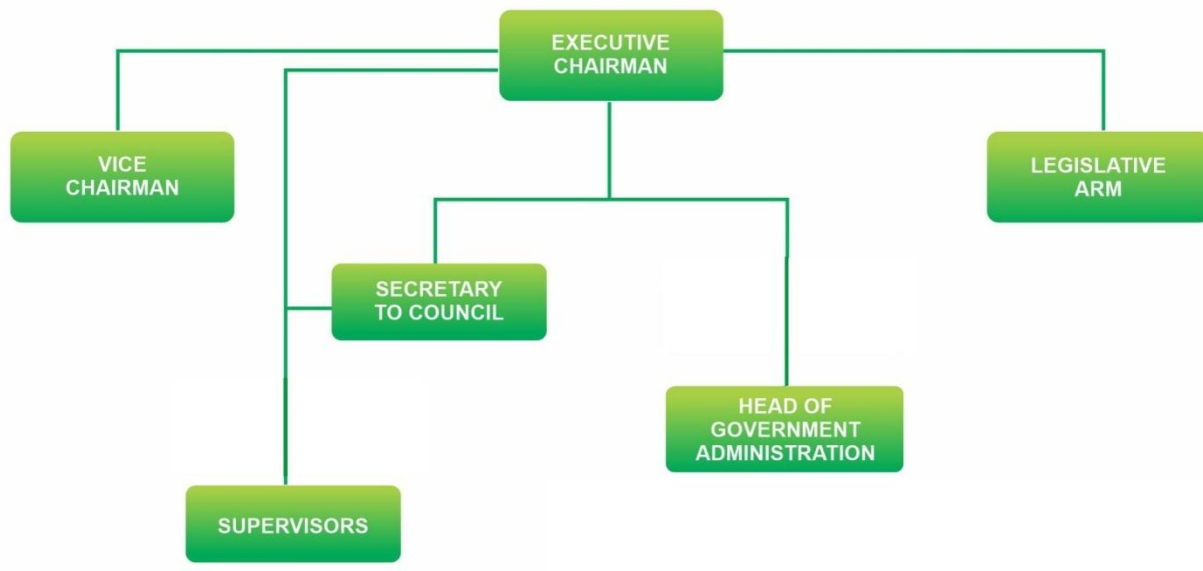
Administrative Dimension

Local government has an administrative dimension. It has its local bureaucracy like other higher levels of government. They are basically of two types. There is the Unified Service which is region-wide or state-wide and managed by a single Local Government Service Commission. There the Localize Service which is restricted the individual local governments. . (Tonwe, D.A. 2011)

2.2 Historical and Geographical Overview of Oredo Local Government

Oredo Local Government Area is situated in the southern part of Edo State, Nigeria. It is one of the 18 local government areas that make up Edo State. It has an area of 249km² and a population of approximately 536,827 according to the 2006 census. It is the most urbanized Government Area in Edo State and not only serves as state capital, but also the seat of the State Government as well as the palace of the Oba of Benin. Oredo is therefore also the capital of the Historical Benin Empire, making it one of the oldest Cities in the World. It is characterized by a diverse landscape, featuring plains, hills, Benin River, and Ogba River that runs into the Gelegele Sea Port, which greatly influences its economic activities and cultural heritage. (oredolga.ed.gov.ng/)

For purposes of convenient administration, there are Twelve (12) political wards in Oredo Local Government which cut across both urban and rural communities, Namely; Ogbe, GRA/Etete/Iyekogba, Uzebu, Urubi, Oliha/Ukhegie, Iyaro/New Benin I, New Benin II, Oredo, Ikpema/Eguadase, Unueru/Ugboka, Ogbelaka/Nekpenekpen, Ibiwe/Iwegie/Ugbague. (oredolga.ed.gov.ng/)



(oredolga.ed.gov.ng/)

2.3 Local Government in Nigeria

Local government autonomy is the adequate and relative power given to local government councils to perform their local or constitutional responsibilities or duties optimally. They canvassed for two types of autonomy for local government councils which are absolute and adequate but relative in nature. Imhanlahimi and Ikeanyibe (2014),

To Chaturvedi (2006), local government autonomy is concerned with the local body having financial as well as management, autonomy with a view to deciding and determining its own course of action. collaborating the above assertion, Mawhood (1993), views local government autonomy as the relative separation of central as well

as local spheres of government on the one hand. On the other hand, be put forward that the central government should only play the function of monitoring the activities of local councils without any intrusion into their domain.

In the views of these authors or scholars, local government autonomy in Nigeria and in the other less developed nations globally, should be relative and not absolute. This autonomy entails absolute separation of responsibilities and powers but relative and adequate autonomy should be granted to enable local government councils perform their functions optimally as well as to also discharge legally or constitutionally assigned, responsibilities satisfactorily, but without under interference or restraint from the state and federal tiers of government.

The principle of autonomy is an essential matter for Local Governments because it cannot function efficiently without appreciable elements of freedom. Global governance practice accords local governments significant autonomy as last mile governance delivery agents. However, history has shown that Local Government Administration before 1976 showed the existence of these institutions as mere field units in Nigeria. There was so much dictation by the State government which undermined good development at the level. This development no doubt informed the 1976 reforms, and the guarantee of third tier status in the constitution, which then was expected to serve as a respite to Local government. Accordingly, the 1976 reform initiated, particularly the financial and political autonomy of the Local government which was further strengthened by the civil service reform of 1988. Yusuf et al (2024)

Over the past decades, local governments have been almost crippled in most states, where the governors seize their federal allocation and only release funds to them on piecemeal, a practice which barely keeps them going (Agbo, 2024). As a result of this, former President Muhammadu Buhari in one of the interviews with Arise Television during his tenure expressed his indignation about the state of local government system in the country, where he narrowed down the question about restructuring to the treatment of Local government. To that effect, the then President in May 2020 signed Executive Order 10 granting financial autonomy to local governments in Nigeria, together with state judiciary and House of Assembly. Interestingly, the particular Executive Order was met with strong resistance as it fell apart due to the governors' objection to it (Wale, 2022). Thus, the Supreme Court nullified the Executive Order 10 by declaring that the then Nigerian President overstepped his powers by promulgating such a rule (Ameh, 2022).

However, on July 11th, 2024, the Supreme Court of the Nigeria being an Apex court of the country in a suit brought by the Federal Government of Nigeria through its unanimous judgment affirmed the financial autonomy of the Nigeria's 774 local government to strengthen their independence in the country. In addition, the Supreme Court made some other farreaching decisions to reposition local government administration in the country. They are:

- The declaration of the appointment of caretaker committees to replace elected local government executives.
- ensuring democratic governance at the local government level in the 36 states of the federation

- Monthly disbursement of federal allocations to the local governments directly to them by the federation account, and
- The restraining the state governors from collecting funds belonging to the local government councils when no democratically elected local government councils are in place. Yusuf et al (2024)

Although the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as altered) in section 7(1) and section 162 (paragraphs, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8) guaranteed some form of autonomy to local government, and these provisions are essentially aimed at protecting the local government from unnecessary interference from other tiers of government and to enable it play significant roles in the national development process. Unfortunately, findings from research by different scholars (such as Awotokun, 2005 and Adeyemi, 2013)) as well as observations by practitioners' points to the fact that the autonomy of the local government is more of a mirage and that has become increasingly difficult to realize following the rate of interference by state governments both in the political, administrative and financial affairs of the local government. It is in the context that this work intends to scrutinize the 1999 constitutional provisions in respect of the local government autonomy and their adequacy in guaranteeing it, and to examine the implications of state government interference for local government to contribute to national development.

2.4 Local Autonomy and Socio Economic Development in Nigeria

Local government autonomy remains an avenue for promoting socioeconomic development of rural areas based on the yearnings or priorities of the rural dwellers

in Nigeria. The concept of development also has numerous definitions in the literature. Some defined development as an act while view it as a process.

Development is simply a process which creates growth, progress, positive change or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social as well as demographic components. To Todaro and Smith (2011), is a multidimensional process involving the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems.

In line with the above conceptualization by Todaro, Smith and Ering (2014), views development as a process of improving the quality of all human lives, such improvement may include raising people's living levels (e.g. income, consumption, education, medical services etc.) via relevant economic growth processes.

On his part, Ottong (2006), defined development as the act of creating conditions conducive to growth of people's self-esteem through the establishment of social, political as well as economic systems and institutions, which promote human dignity and respect. He stated further that it implies increasing access to better life (improved welfare) and the freedom to choose by enlarging the range of choices available.

In the words of Ekong (2003) cited in Ering (2014), development is a process of social change in which the people of a community organize themselves for planning and action, define their common and individual problems, and execute these maximum of reliance upon the resources of the community.

Socio-economic development is the process of social and economic development in a society which is measured with indicators such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP),

life expectancy, literacy as well as levels of employment (Ering, 2014). It refers to society related economic factors which relate and influence one another. The greatest rationale for the creation of local government globally is essentially to employ it to assume responsibility for the socio-economic development of rural areas directly as well as also contribute indirectly to the development of the country. This development has been viewed from two fundamental vantage positions and or view points: Socio-economic as well as holistic.

The socio-economic perspective was hinged on the traditional definition that expressed concerns for social problems such as poverty, inequality and unemployment which must be alleviated to bring about socio- economic development in the rural areas in the country. The second perspective which is more current definition of development was blazed by scholars or authors such as Todaro and Smith (2011), that gave a holistic conceptualization that development is a multidimensional process involving major changes in social structures, popular attitudes and national institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality and the eradication of absolute poverty. Development invariably, must represent the entire gamut to change in which the whole social system turned to the divergent basic needs as well as desires of individuals, and social groups found in that system, departs from condition of life extensively perceived as unsatisfactory toward a situation or condition of life regarded as materially as well as spiritually better. Okoye,(2021)

This current or contemporary conceptualization of development is thus holistic, taking into consideration all spheres of life, ranging from political, cultural, social, economic, religious etc. Development as currently defined encompasses the

comprehensive development of man as well as his environment in all ramifications in a locality, under a political setting or structure such as a local government, on a participatory as well as sustainable manner. This is better achieved through local government autonomy. Okoye,(2021)

2.4.1 Justification for Local Government Autonomy and National Development

Though a number of reasons have been adduced by the proponents of local government autonomy (such as Association of Local Government of Nigeria (ALGON), Nigerian Union of

Local Government Employees (NULGE)), but the generally agreed reasons can be stated as follows:

- a. It will help to strengthen democratic decentralization of power and placing power in the hands of citizens at the grassroots level governance, thereby entrench development in rural area.
- b. Political education – Local government autonomy will develop the system, and help in educating the people in the rural areas to gain knowledge of the political system.
- c. Autonomy of local government will help to deliver even development to each and every

Nigerian since each person resides in a local council located in either the rural, semirural or urban area. Yusuf et al (2024)

- d. Local government fosters local democracy: As the government is grassroots-based consisting of small units of local communities upon which political powers

are developed to cater for their needs, it will engender greater participation of the people in the process of government. This includes the election of councillors by the electorate, serving as councillor, and campaigning for local government elections and enhance political participation.

e. It will guarantee more money at the disposal of local government in order to provide basic amenities, infrastructures and deliver services to citizens as the state has been removed from tampering with local government fund. Yusuf et al (2024)

f. Local contractors may rely on the local government instead of the state and federal, and this may develop their capacity to handle bigger project in the future.

g. It equally places more political power in the hands of citizens and their institutions thereby help them to demand for accountability, transparency and developments. Thus, by virtue of citizen's participation in governance, it makes the decision-making process, policy initiation and monitoring of programmes encompassing. Yusuf et al (2024)

h. Local government autonomy will provide a voice to minorities who will have representation at the local government level. Minorities no matter the size of their population will be part of the political equation and process of electing both the councilor chairman that will lead them for period of time

i. Lastly, it will provide capacity building of people in rural areas in form of economic empowerment through job creation and financial empowerment and freedom from external control of allocation which the excess can be channeled into the economic system of the community's concern. Yusuf et al (2024)

The above reasons are some of the motivating factors by the proponents' local government autonomy which will ensure citizen's participation in governance at

all levels. This is even as countries across the world are shifting attention to the local government and decentralization of responsibilities to make for easy development and government at the grass root.

Yusuf et al (2024)

2.5 Theoretical Framework

It has become a general belief in social science for facts to be verified precisely within a theory, rather than in an isolated manner.

The theory which informs our discussion of LG autonomy in Nigeria is the general systems theory. It is a theory that has been contributed to by a number of writers, such as Almond (1960);

Easton (1965); Adamolekun (1983) and Offiong (1996). A synthesis of the definitions of a system given by various writers, some of whom are listed above, can be stated as follows. It is a phenomenon of whatever type, including physical, biological, social, political, etc., which is an organized whole with identifiable, interrelated structures delineating it from the environment (supra system) in which it is located and with which it interacts, processing the inputs from it into outputs for it.

The general systems theory seeks to argue that every system, including political system, has subsystems which make up the entire system. They are assigned functions and provided with enabling empowerment, including resources, appropriate authority, etc. to enable them discharge their responsibilities optimally.

Where this is the case, there is said to be homeostasis (stability) in the political system. On the other hand, instability reigns in the political system where the contrary is the case and the subsystems and entire system are also unable to function optimally.

Applying this brief exposition of the political systems analysis to the Nigerian LG system, the LGs in the country constitute the subsystems. They must be well handled in terms of being fed with adequate inputs, so that they can contribute appropriately to the optimality of the Nigerian political system, as well as its homeostasis. If the reverse is the case, that is, if the LGs do not have the required inputs to operate, two important things may happen. First is that there might be instability and the second is that there might be discontent amongst the citizenry. The two are intertwined,

It is therefore very useful to realize the importance of the systems theory in the handling of LG autonomy in Nigeria. This means the realization of the sub-systemic nature of LGs which are an integral part of the overall Nigerian political system. They have their assigned responsibilities to perform to the benefit of the people, not as appendages of either the Federal or State Governments. Failure to treat the LGs as such could send frustration through their veins, disenchantment and inability to perform and hence dissatisfaction amongst the populace.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the method through which the research work was conducted to achieve the objective of the study. It discusses the design of the study, population of the study, sampling size and technique, source of data, technique of data collection and data analysis.

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design is considered appropriate because it allows the researcher to obtain the opinions of respondents on how local government autonomy influences socio-economic development within Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. The survey method also provides an avenue for collecting primary data directly from the target population through the use of questionnaires.

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive survey research design. The design is appropriate because it enables the researcher to gather data from a large population within Oredo Local Government Area and describe the existing relationship between local government autonomy and socio-economic development. It is ideal for social science research where the objective is to explore and analyze the status of a phenomenon without manipulating any variables. Through this design, the study will rely on the use of structured questionnaires to collect relevant data from respondents

3.2 Study Population

The population of this study will consist of individuals living or working within Oredo Local Government Area of Edo State. This will include civil servants, community leaders, traders, youths and political office holders. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2024), Oredo Local Government Area has an estimated population of approximately 306,117 people. This figure will serve as the baseline population from which a representative sample will be drawn.

There are Twelve (12) political wards in Oredo Local Government which cut across both urban and rural communities, Namely; Ogbe, GRA/Etete/Iyekogba, Uzebu, Urubi, Oliha/Ukhegie, Iyaro/New Benin I, New Benin II, Oredo, Ikpema/Eguadase, Unueru/Ugboka, Ogbelaka/Nekpenekpen, Ibiwe/Iwegie/Ugbague. (oredolga.ed.gov.ng/)

3.3 Sampling size

The sample size for this study will consist of 100 respondents who will be selected from across Oredo Local Government Area using the Yamane formula.

$$n = N / (1 + N (e)^2)$$

Given:

$$N = 306,117$$

$$e = 0.10 \text{ (10\% margin of error)}$$

$$(e)^2 = (0.10)^2 = 0.01$$

$$N(e)^2 = 306,117 \times 0.01 = 3,061.17$$

$$1 + N(e)^2 = 1 + 3,061.17 = 3,062.17$$

$$n = 306,117 \div 3,062.17 \approx 99.99$$

= 100 (approximately)

3.4 Sampling Technique

The sampling technique used will be the stratified random sampling to ensure fair representation of civil servants, political office holders and community leaders. This technique is appropriate as it will provide the researcher with a diverse range of responses from various stakeholders within the local government system, thereby enhancing the reliability and objectivity of the study's findings.

3.4 Source of Data

The study will make use of both primary and secondary data sources:

Primary Data: Data will be collected directly from respondents in Oredo Local Government Area using structured questionnaires. This instrument will be used to gather firsthand information on the challenges, effectiveness, and perceptions of local government autonomy and socio economic development in Oredo.

Secondary Data: Data will also be sourced from textbooks, academic journals, government publications, reports of constitutional conferences, newspapers, and relevant online materials.

The combination of both data types will ensure a comprehensive and evidence-based analysis of the topic under investigation.

3.5 Method of Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection will be questionnaires developed by the researcher structured into closed end questions, administered in the study area such that, questions that will give insight to the research objective of study will be included. The questionnaire will be administered on 120 respondents which is the total sample size, randomly selected from the area of study.. The questionnaire will consist of two sections. Section A will cover the demographic characteristics of the respondents, such as age, gender, and employment status. Section B will include a series of structured questions focused on how local government autonomy aids socio economic development in Oredo Local Government Area. The questions will be designed to assess the respondents' knowledge of, access to, and perceptions about local government autonomy, socio economic development and the specific challenges that hinder development at the grassroots level.

3.6 Technique for Data Analysis

The statistical method to be used to analyze data collected from the respondents will be the Statistical package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency counts and percentages will be employed to summarize the data. The results will be presented in tables and interpreted to provide insights into the trends and challenges identified. This analytical approach will allow the researcher to draw logical conclusions and make recommendations that are grounded in empirical evidence.

3.7 Validation of Instrument

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the structured questionnaire will be subjected to expert review. The questionnaire will be submitted to the project supervisor for content validation, and any observations or corrections made will be incorporated into the final draft. This process is necessary to confirm that the instrument appropriately reflects the research objectives and is capable of eliciting accurate and meaningful responses from the target population

CHAPTER FOUR
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter deals with the presentation and analysis of the result obtained from questionnaires. The data gathered were presented according to the order in which they were arranged in the research questions, sample percentage and pie charts were used to analyze the demographic information of the respondents. The research generated valuable insights from 100 respondents who were selected from across Oredo Local Government Area using the Yamane formula.

4.2 PERCENTAGE CALCULATION OF BIO DATA

SECTION A

Table 1.0

Gender Distribution	Respondents	% Respondent
female	65	65%
male	35	35%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretations

From the above table, it is seen that 65% of the respondents are females which account for the majority of the sample while 35% of the remaining respondents were males.

Table 1.1

Age Distribution	Respondents	% Respondent
18-35	30	30%
36-53	45	45%
54 and above	25	25%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From table 1.1, it was discovered that 30% of the respondents were within the age bracket 18-35 years while 45% which form the majority of our respondents were within the age bracket 36-53 years. And lastly, 25% of the remaining respondents fall within the age bracket 54 and above years.

Table 1.2

Marital Status	Respondents	% Respondent
Single	35	35%
Married	65	65%
Divorced	Nil	Nil
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above percentage computation, it was observed that 35% of the sampled population were single. And 65% were married while none were divorced.

Table 1.3

Occupational Status	Respondents	% Respondent
student	10	10%
Self employed	30	30%
Private sector	15	15%
Civil Servants	45	45%
Others	-	-
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above table 1.3, it was discovered that 10% of the total respondents were students, 30% were self employed, 15% were private sector workers, while 45% were civil servants.

Table 1.4

Educational Qualification	Respondents	% Respondent
SSCE	10	10%
OND/NCE	15	15%
HND/BSC	40	40%
MSC/PHD	35	35%
Others	-	-
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above table, it is being noticed that 10% of the total sample population are SSCE holders, 15% were OND/NCE certificate holders, 40% has HND/BSC while 35% of the total respondents are MSC/PHD holders.

ANALYZING IN PERCENTAGE EACH ITEM IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE (SECTION

B).

Question 1

The local government in Oredo operates independently without interference from the state government.

Table 2.0

Question One (1)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	34	34%
No	66	66%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the percentage computation of table 2.0, it was discovered that 34% of the sampled respondents agreed that The local government in Oredo operates independently without interference from the state government. While 66% of the respondent disagreed.

Question 2:

The Edo State government often influences financial decisions of Oredo Local Government.

Table 2.1

Question Two (2)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	62	62%
No	38	38%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above 2.1, it is clearly noticed that 62% of the total agreed that The Edo State government often influences financial decisions of Oredo Local Government.. While 38% disagreed.

Question 3

Oredo LGA has full control over its internally generated revenue.

Table 2.2

Question Three (3)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	38	38%
No	62	62%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From table 2.2, that 38% of the total sample population were in agreement that Oredo LGA has full control over its internally generated revenue.. While 62% disagreed.

Question 4

The local government has the freedom to recruit and manage its own staff

Table 2.3

Question Four (4)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	63	63%
No	37	37%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

In table 2.3, 63% of the total sampled respondents were of the opinion that the local government has the freedom to recruit and manage its own staff But 37% of the respondents were not in support of the aforementioned assertion.

Question 5:

State government interference reduces the effectiveness of local governance in Oredo.

Table 2.4

Question Five (5)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	80	80%
No	20	20%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

According to table 2.4, 80% of the total sampled respondents are of the opinion that State government interference reduces the effectiveness of local governance in Oredo. While 20% were not.

Question 6

Limited autonomy affects the ability of Oredo LGA to provide quality healthcare services.

Table 2.5

Question Six (6)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	64	64%

No	36	36%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above table, it was deduced that 64% were of the opinion that Limited autonomy affects the ability of Oredo LGA to provide quality healthcare services. While 36% disagreed.

Question 7

Poor autonomy affects the maintenance of local roads and public infrastructure.

Table 2.6

Question Seven (7)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	69	69%
No	31	31%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

Based table 2.6, 69% of the total sampled population agreed that Poor autonomy affects the maintenance of local roads and public infrastructure. While 31% did not see it to be so.

Question 8

Lack of fiscal independence has hindered the implementation of development projects.

Table 2.7

Question Eight (8)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	67	67%
No	33	33%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

Table 2.7 shows that 67% of the total sampled population believes that Lack of fiscal independence has hindered the implementation of development projects While 31% of the respondents were in disagreement.

Question 9

Greater local government autonomy would improve the standard of living in Oredo LGA.

Table 2.8

Question Nine (9)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	75	75%
No	25	25%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above table 2.8, 75% of the total believe that Greater local government autonomy would improve the standard of living in Oredo LGA, While 25% do not believe.

Question 10

Mismanagement and corruption reduce the effectiveness of local governance.

Table 2.10

Question Ten (10)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	81	81%
No	19	19%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

It is observed from table 2.9, that 81% of the total sampled population were in agreement that Mismanagement and corruption reduce the effectiveness of local governance.. While 19% were not in agreement.

Question 11

Inadequate funding affects the local government's ability to meet its development responsibilities.

Table 2.11

Question Eleven (11)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	67	67%
No	33	33%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

Table 2.11, shows that 67% of the total sample population were in agreement that Inadequate funding affects the local government's ability to meet its development responsibilities.. While 33% do not think so.

Question 12

The Joint State-Local Government Account limits financial independence of Oredo LGA.

Table 2.12

Question twelve	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	79	79%
No	21	21%

Total	100	100
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Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above table, it is being observed that 79% of the total sample respondents were in agreement that The Joint State-Local Government Account limits financial independence of Oredo LGA.. While 41% of the remaining sample population were not.

Question 13

Political interference from the state hinders project implementation.

Table 2.13

Question Thirteen (13)	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	85	45%
No	15	55%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

According to 2.13, 85% of the total sampled respondents were in agreement that Political interference from the state hinders project implementation. While 15% of the remaining respondents did not agree that Political interference from the state hinders project implementation.

Question 15

Poor administrative capacity limits the autonomy of Oredo LGA.

Table 2.15

Question 15	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	54	54%
No	46	46%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the percentage computation of table 2.14, it was discovered that 54% of the sampled respondents agreed that effective tax policies will enhance attainment of education policies. While 46% of the respondent were not in support that effective tax policies will enhance attainment of education policies.

Question 16

The Joint State-Local Government Account limits financial independence of Oredo LGA.

Table 2.16

Question 16	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	62	62%
No	38	38%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above 2.15, it is clearly noticed that 62% of the total population were in support that The Joint State-Local Government Account limits financial independence of Oredo LGA. While 38% were not in support.

Question 17

Autonomy would enable more effective prioritization of community needs.

Table 2.17

Question 17	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	78	78%
No	22	22%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From table 2.16, we see that 78% of the total sample population were in agreement that Autonomy would enable more effective prioritization of community needs, While 22% disagreed to the fact.

Question 18

Fiscal autonomy would boost local revenue generation and utilization.

Table 2.18

Question 18	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	63	63%
No	37	37%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

As seen in table 2.17, 63% of the total sampled respondents were of the opinion that Fiscal autonomy would boost local revenue generation and utilization. But 37% of the respondents were not in support.

Question 19

Enhanced autonomy would improve community participation in decision-making.

Table 2.19

Question 19	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	60	60%
No	40	40%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

In table 2.19, 60% of the total sampled respondents were in favour that Enhanced autonomy would improve community participation in decision-making. While 40% were not in favour.

Question 20

Local government autonomy would foster faster socio-economic development in Oredo LGA.

Table 2.20

Question 20	Respondents	% Respondent
Yes	80	80%
No	20	20%
Total	100	100

Source: Field Survey; 2025

Interpretation

From the above table, its discovered that 80% were of the opinion Local government autonomy would foster faster socio-economic development in Oredo LGA. While 20% disagreed.

4.3 Conclusion

of

Findings

From the analysis and interpretation of data collected through questionnaires administered to respondents in Oredo Local Government Area, it can be concluded that the level of autonomy enjoyed by the local government is limited. The findings revealed that a majority (66%) of respondents agreed that Oredo Local Government does not operate independently without interference from the state government. Similarly, 62% confirmed that the Edo State

Government often influences the financial decisions of the local government, while 79% agreed that the Joint State–Local Government Account limits financial independence.

Furthermore, 80% of respondents believed that state interference reduces the effectiveness of local governance, while 69% and 67% respectively agreed that poor autonomy and lack of fiscal independence hinder infrastructure maintenance and project implementation. A significant proportion (75%) of respondents also affirmed that greater local government autonomy would improve the standard of living in Oredo LGA.

The study further revealed that inadequate funding (67%), mismanagement and corruption (81%), and political interference (85%) are major obstacles to effective local governance. Respondents also believed that enhanced autonomy would promote better prioritization of community needs (78%), improve local revenue generation (63%), and encourage greater citizen participation in governance (60%).

In summary, the findings indicate that limited autonomy negatively affects the socio-economic development of Oredo Local Government Area. Greater administrative and fiscal independence would enhance efficiency, and developmental outcomes at the grassroots. Therefore, strengthening local government autonomy remains crucial for fostering sustainable socio-economic development in Oredo and Nigeria as a whole

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of the Study

This research work examined the extent to which the level of autonomy granted to local governments affects socio-economic development in Nigeria. The study was motivated by the persistent challenges of limited autonomy, poor financial control, and political interference that have weakened local governments' ability to deliver meaningful development at the grassroots level.

The study recognized local government as the third tier of government constitutionally established under Section 7(1) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, created to bring governance closer to the people and enhance participatory development. However, despite constitutional provisions, the reality shows that local governments in Nigeria—particularly Oredo LGA—operate under the heavy influence of state governments, especially in the areas of finance, administration, and political decision-making. It is more theory than practical.

The specific objectives of the study were to: (1) Examine the extent to which local government autonomy is constrained by state government interference in Oredo Local Government Area; (2) Analyze the implications of limited autonomy on the efficient delivery of public services and socio-economic development in Oredo LGA; (3) Identify the challenges faced by Oredo LGA in achieving socio-economic development due to the lack of autonomy; (4) Assess the potential benefits of greater autonomy in

improving socio-economic outcomes; and (5) Provide policy recommendations for enhancing local government autonomy to promote sustainable development.

A descriptive survey design was adopted; also, the study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was collected using structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using simple percentages and tables.

5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that local government autonomy remains largely theoretical in Nigeria, as the practice of centralized control continues to hinder effective governance at the grassroots. In the case of Oredo Local Government Area, the lack of fiscal and administrative independence has made the council dependent on the state government for policy direction, funding, and project execution.

The findings show that limited autonomy leads to poor service delivery, low infrastructural development, weak community participation, and poor socio-economic outcomes. The Joint State–Local Government Account system, though designed for fiscal coordination, has instead become a mechanism for financial control by the state government, thereby denying local government's direct access to their statutory allocations.

Furthermore, the study established that autonomy is a necessary precondition for effective governance and sustainable development. When local governments have the

freedom to plan, generate, and utilize their own resources, they are better positioned to respond to local needs, promote accountability, and encourage citizen participation. Therefore, the success of grassroots development in Nigeria is largely dependent on the extent to which local governments are granted true autonomy.

5.3 Recommendations

The creation of local government emanates from the desire to facilitate development at the grassroots level. Local government autonomy is of uttermost significance due to its functional ability to generate a sense of belongingness, safety as well as gratification among its inhabitants. All types of government, administrations, regimes or political systems have so far made sure that this goal is attained. The concept and practice of local government autonomy is a strategy for ensuring national administrative development, as well as political efficacy. Whatever is the kind of government; local government autonomy is viewed essentially as well as regarded as the gateway to, and guarantor of national socio-economic development of rural areas in the country (Gauga, 2004).

Based on this study and the findings gathered, the recommendations include:

1. **Grant Full Fiscal Autonomy to Local Governments:** The Nigerian government should ensure that local governments receive their allocations directly from the Federation Account. The Joint State–Local Government Account should either be abolished or constitutionally restructured to prevent diversion of funds by state governments.
2. **Reduce Political and Administrative Interference:** State governments should refrain from excessive interference in the recruitment, promotion, and deployment of

local government staff. Local councils should have the authority to make decisions on their internal administrative matters.

3. Promote Accountability and Transparency: Mechanisms such as financial audits, performance reports, and public budget hearings should be institutionalized to ensure that funds allocated to local governments are properly utilized for community development.

4. Enhance Internally Generated Revenue (IGR): Oredo Local Government should explore local sources of revenue—such as rates, levies, and community partnerships—while improving tax collection systems to reduce dependence on external funding.

5. Encourage Community Participation in Governance: The people of Oredo LGA should be involved in identifying, planning, and monitoring development projects. This will promote inclusiveness and ensure that local needs are adequately addressed.

6. There should be a strict adherence and implementation of the landmark decision by the Supreme Court of Nigeria on 11 July 2024 that upheld the financial autonomy of the 774 local government councils in Nigeria, ruling that allocations from the Federation Account meant for LGAs must be directly paid rather than routed through state governments,

where the court found that state governments' control or detention of LGA funds violated the constitutional role of LGAs.

This ruling is significant because it reaffirms that local governments are constitutionally recognized as the “third tier” of government, with independent financial management responsibilities.

7. Strengthen Anti-Corruption Measures: The Economic and Financial Crimes

Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) should monitor local government expenditures to reduce embezzlement and misuse of funds.

8. Promote Collaboration Between Governments: While autonomy is important, coordination between federal, state, and local governments should be improved through policy harmonization and joint planning to avoid duplication of projects and wastage of resources.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence that local government autonomy is central to grassroots development in Nigeria. Using Oredo LGA as a case study, it demonstrates how administrative and fiscal constraints impede socio-economic growth and how enhanced autonomy could lead to more responsive and sustainable development.

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Yusuf Ibrahim, National Institute for Legislative and Democratic Studies

APPENDIX

Department of Public Administration,
Faculty of Social Science,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR COOPERATION IN COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE

I am an undergraduate student in the Department of Public Administration from the above mentioned university. As part of the requirements for my B.Sc. degree, I am conducting research on the topic: local government autonomy and socio-economic development in Nigeria: a study of oredo local government of edo state. This questionnaire is designed to collect relevant data for the study. Your responses will be used solely for the purpose stated above and will remain confidential.

I kindly request your sincere and thoughtful responses to all questions in the questionnaire. Please indicate your answers by ticking [] in the space provided under the most appropriate column for each item.

Thank you for your valuable cooperation and support.

Arinze Anna Jetelojor

Researcher

Title: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA: A STUDY OF OREDO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF EDO STATE

SECTION A: RESPONDENT'S DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

- 1. Gender: Male Female
- 2. Age bracket: 18–25 26–35 36–45 46 and above
- 3. Marital Status: Single Married Divorced Widowed
- 4. Educational Qualification: SSCE OND/NCE HND/B.Sc M.Sc/Ph.D
- 5. Occupation: Civil Servant Private Sector Worker Self-Employed Student Others (specify) _____
- 6. How long have you lived in Oredo LGA? Less than 5 years 5–10 years 11–15 years Over 15 years

SECTION B:

Please tick (✓) the appropriate box: yes or no

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
	LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY		
1	The local government in Oredo operates independently without interference from the state government.		
2	The Edo State government often influences financial decisions of Oredo Local Government.		

3	Oredo LGA has full control over its internally generated revenue.		
4	The local government has the freedom to recruit and manage its own staff		
5	State government interference reduces the effectiveness of local governance in Oredo.		

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
	SERVICE DELIVERY AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
6	Limited autonomy affects the ability of Oredo LGA to provide quality healthcare services.		
7	Poor autonomy affects the maintenance of local roads and public infrastructure.		
8	Lack of fiscal independence has hindered the implementation of development projects		
9	The delivery of education services in Oredo LGA is affected by inadequate autonomy.		
10	Greater local government autonomy would improve the standard of living in Oredo LGA.		

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
	CHALLENGES TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY		
11	The Joint State-Local Government Account limits financial independence of Oredo LGA.		
12	Political interference from the state hinders project implementation.		
13	Mismanagement and corruption reduce the effectiveness of local governance.		
14	Inadequate funding affects the local government's ability to meet its development responsibilities.		
15	Poor administrative capacity limits the autonomy of Oredo LGA.		

S/N	ITEM	YES	NO
	BENEFITS OF GREATER LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTONOMY		

16	Greater autonomy would enhance transparency and accountability in local governance.		
17	Autonomy would enable more effective prioritization of community needs.		
18	Fiscal autonomy would boost local revenue generation and utilization.		
19	Enhanced autonomy would improve community participation in decision-making.		
20	Local government autonomy would foster faster socio-economic development in Oredo LGA.		